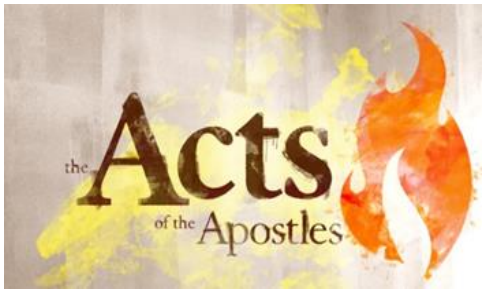
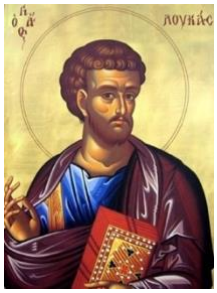
20190216 Acts 18 Pt2 It's All About Encouragement



Acts of the Apostles: Acts 18 Pt 2
Lesson 31 by Faber McMullen,
Union Grove Baptist Church ©2019



How to Teach
How to be Teachable
It's All About Encouragement

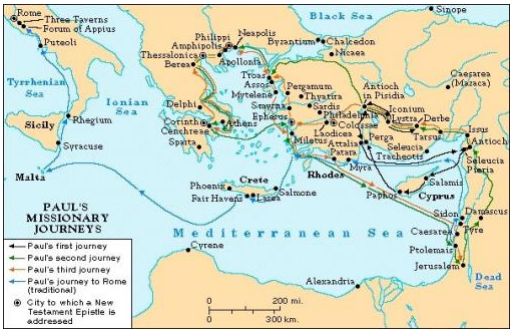
In Acts chapter 18, verse 23 Paul starts his third missionary journey. This small piece of scripture shows us the right way to teach and the right way to be teachable. It is really all about encouragement. We are introduced in this passage to Apollos, one of the greatest church fathers recorded in the New Testament. Open your Bible and turn with me to Acts chapter 18, verse 23 where Paul ends his second missionary journey and where he begins his third missionary journey. Please stand with me and read in honor of God's Word.

[22] And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch. [23] After he had spent some time there, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.[24] Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. [25] This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. [26] So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. [27] And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; [28] for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. (Acts 18:22-28, NKJV).

Let us pray – Lord we know that you are able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, and *this* morning I ask you to do a work in the hearts of all who hear this message. Lord, we will give you all the glory and honor for any progress in our lives. Amen

In verse 23, Paul takes off to see and encourage the churches that he had started. The text tells us that he was "strengthening the disciples" in Galatia and Phrygia. There is a great message in this one verse alone. As we bring the gospel to others we are expected to love, nurture, and encourage those whom God puts us into contact with. One great failing of the church is the neglect of discipleship. Paul was back where he started "strengthening all the disciples."

Luke tells us this and then brings us to two major things very quickly: (1) his introduction of Apollos, and (2) the amazing, miraculous work we see Paul doing in Ephesus. There will be a great awakening in that church and Paul will perform miracles unlike almost any we see in the New Testament.



In verse 24, we see that Apollos was from Alexandria. You will notice in our map that it is down in Egypt. Alexandria was an amazing place. It was the second most important city in the Roman Empire. The population was 600,000 and a huge number of the inhabitants were Jews. The Jews enjoyed great autonomy in Alexandria.

Alexandria had the largest library in the world at that time, and it was filled with very smart people. If you came from Alexandria, you were from the center of learning of the Roman Empire. Doctor Luke tells us that Apollos came from there to Ephesus, that he was an "eloquent man," and that he was "mighty in the scriptures." Apollos had the gift of persuasion. He was speaking and teaching accurately the things that he knew, but he only knew about the baptism of John. Think about how often God gives such a gift of persuasion, but people use it for their own benefit instead of for God's Kingdom. Apollos was an amazing teacher.

He was competent in the scriptures, and he knew and understood all of the prophetic verses that pointed to Jesus the Messiah. He was both eloquent and competent. Sometimes super smart people aren't that great at communicating, but Apollos was an amazingly smart and educated guy who knew how to communicate what he knew.

On Fire for God

Verse 25 says he had been instructed in the "way of the Lord" and he was "fervent in spirit." In the Greek that means that he was "boiling hot." He was red hot!" **He was on fire for God**. Sometimes when we look at a VSG (very smart guy) like Apollos we wonder how we could ever be so accomplished. We can't measure up to such a person, but we can be "on fire for God." We are reminded in scripture that we are to work at keeping that zeal. It is something that we will lose naturally over time, but we're to keep after it.

<u>Paul describes "love in action" in Romans 12:11.</u> *9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. (Romans 12:9-13, NIV).*

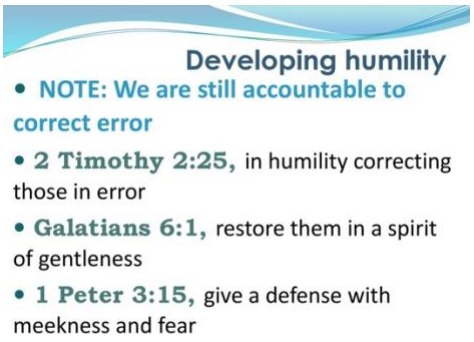
The English Standard Version puts it in very understandable terms: *11 Do not be slothful (LAZY) in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord."* If this weren't a natural tendency,

God would not have put it in His word. It causes us to think for a moment of the kinds of things that put out our fire. I can think of one right off:

> Distractions – they can steal my time away from being in the word and being in prayer. I have to schedule these as a priority. If you're getting into your Bible once a month, you're not "working at it." Work at it. Sometimes, I wake up and my back is sore and my feet are swollen, and it's 4:30 am! That's what's happening as I'm writing this now. I just figure that God has a word to give me, and I get up to receive it.

[14] Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. [15] Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. [16] Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. (Romans 12:14-16, NIV).

Preserving the Dignity of Those You Teach (Teaching with Humility)



Look again now at verse 25 "he spoke accurately the things concerning Jesus." He knew Jesus was the Messiah, but Apollos didn't have all of his theology down right. He was, however, doing the best he could do with what he had. He was speaking boldly in the synagogue, and look who showed up. There we see our friends from last week, Priscilla and Aquila, that beautiful faithful couple. They were really surprised when Apollos got up to speak but didn't know major things. The text quietly tells us that "they took him aside." They didn't confront him in the synagogue in front of others. They didn't challenge him in public. Rather, they invited him home, they fed him, and they "explained to him the way of God more accurately."

We will all come across people that have gaps in their understanding, and differences in their theology. I've heard all sorts of things from the Levitical law being interjected into the gospel. I've heard great distractions concerning the end times and Christ's return. When we come across such people, don't talk down to them, but take them aside and weave in what you know from God's word to make a whole picture. Did you know that none of us have the whole picture?

People can read their Bibles, and go to church, but they still don't have the whole picture. Part of the problem is that God's Word is not being taught in churches. Many churches don't go through the Bible verse by verse like we do at Union Grove. The pastors and teachers hop around so much no one gets an overall picture and an in-depth understanding of the Word.

Having a Teachable Spirit

I am not sure who first said this, but admitting that you need help doesn't make you worthless. It makes you fixable and teachable. People who are "know it alls" are unable to learn anything. It takes an humble heart to receive teaching. Let's look at Apollos' response. He was humble *and* he was teachable. Apollos was obviously brilliant, but he was open and able to be corrected in his understanding. Are you teachable? When we are not teachable it is a form of pride. Are you guilty of having spiritual pride? Are you so self-righteous you believe in your heart that you have way more to teach than to learn? When we think we know it all, we are saying that we are not open to learn the new things that God would teach us. I've told many of you all that this last year was difficult for me spiritually. I struggled to be the pastor that you need and deserve. Seminary didn't prepare me for many of the issues I have encountered in myself and in others. At those times when we have a gap in our learning, we should be open to learn and pray that a Priscilla and/or Aquila (or both) will help us to fill in the gaps. God sent me my Priscillas and Aquilas and some are in this congregation.

The Power of Encouragement

So they invited Apollos over and they ENCOURAGED him. They probably asked permission to speak into some areas. Apollos was totally willing to learn and because of this he was used all the more powerfully. The text says he went back to Corinth, and the brothers there in Ephesus wrote a letter of recommendation introducing him to the people there in Corinth.

Because Apollos was open to learning, God made him spiritually more powerful than he had ever been, and he became a greater help to the church. Apollos was a breath of fresh air in the church. Did you know that when you're teachable, you can be a blessing to this local church and also to the Church? Let me ask you a few questions to challenge you this morning.

Do you use your gifts to bless the church? Do you even know that you have certain spiritual gifts? Are you a breath of fresh air in this place? Do you have a gift of helps, a gift of teaching, or maybe another gift? God has given each of you a gift. Have you unwrapped your gift from God?

The Powerful Impact of Apollos on the Church

Apollos was sort of like the Tony Evans or Dr. David Jeremiah of his day. The carnal, immature church in Corinth began to feel so privileged and so special for having such a leader that they began to center their focus on the man who had received the gift instead of on God who gave the gift. This group probably became divided because they became enraptured with Apollos' skill and they began to debate the teachings that he would give. They then began to compare him with Peter and Paul whom they had first met, and who

were in no way as polished as Apollos. Was this Apollos' fault? No. Let's listen to Paul as he writes to the fleshly Corinthian church.

[10] I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. [11] My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. [12] What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." (1 Corinthians 1:10-12, NIV).

Paul goes on in his letter to the Corinthians to tell them how we are all interdependent and how it is God who does the real work.

[5] What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. [6] I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. [7] So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. [8] The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. [9] For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building. (1 Corinthians 3:5-9, NIV).

Scholars are not sure, but it is believed by many that the book of Hebrews was written by Apollos. It is exactly the kind of writing that scripture tells us Apollos would be equipped to do. Just think of the disaster if Priscilla and Aquila had been more interested in being right than in acting in love. They watered, nurtured, and encouraged Apollos, and he went on to do great things for the church.

We have a record of this couple taking Apollos aside to fill in the gaps. Can you do this? Can you humble yourself to have another person fill in your gaps in knowledge? It can be HUGE. IT IS THE LITTLE THINGS WE DO THAT MAKE THE BIG DIFFERENCE.

Priscilla and Aquila invited one man home for dinner to encourage him. Their one small action CHANGED THE WORLD. GO DO YOUR ONE LITTLE THING, AND LEAVE IT TO GOD TO MAKE SOMETHING GREAT OF IT!

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.